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ABSTRACT

Proposed in the Michigan legislature is the establishment of a new institution to be known as Wolverine State College: an institution without a campus or principal location. The proposed legislation articulates three distinct state policy objectives: (1) Under the umbrella of a single institution, the development of a meaningful alternative for individuals pursuing their own educational objectives; (2) adult and continuing off-campus education which could be financed through a system of dual enrollments as well as other procedures; (3) the application of coordinated planning in off-campus education and the extension of off-campus services to new populations, thereby avoiding non-essential and possibly costly duplication of effort on the part of institutions statewide in their field. In addition, the concept of regional learning centers and the integration of the State Library is also embodied in this bill. Furthermore, cable television is central in two important ways. First, a multiple channel system with two-way capability could be employed to tie the proposed regional learning centers into a coherent statewide system. Second, the regional system can be expected to tie community cable systems operating on a commercial basis and thereby touch the homes of adults, for use as needed. (WCM)

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State Systems Planning and the Potential Application of Cable Television in the Development of New Institutions

by Gerald C. Beckwith

As an introduction to this paper, I should like to express a personal bias, one arrived at on the basis of some seven years of involvement in higher education planning at the state level as a member of the staff of the Michigan Commission on Higher Education: Non-traditional approaches to education frequently require the development and establishment of non-traditional institutional forms and systems of learning to be successful. Moreover, efforts made to graft such onto established institutions will be less than successful, and efforts made to change these institutions internally may be doomed to frustration and ultimate failure, except, perhaps, under conditions of extreme crises or through application of considerable external pressure, economic or political.

The history of higher education in this country contains many noteworthy examples of what I am talking about. These include the shift from the denominationally dominated, private institutions of higher education to public institutions, and the development within the public sector of land grant colleges and universities (initially institutions devoted to education in agriculture and the applied sciences). A more recent case in point can be cited in the development and implementation of public community colleges and in the establishment and expansion of private

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business schools and other proprietary institutions.

Having acknowledged my primary belief in the need for new institutions to meet new needs and serve new populations, let me now quote two statements from Governor Milliken's "Message and Charge" to the Commission on Higher Education which he recently appointed. That charge, incidentally, was of a three-fold nature. The Governor, in asking the Commission to point the direction for the future of higher education in Michigan, stressed the need, first, for the Commission to assess, and when necessary, to redefine the goals, purposes, and functions of *postsecondary* education in Michigan, and the instructional *delivery systems* required to carry out such purposes.

He also asked that efforts be made to determine needed procedures and structures for improved planning and coordination of postsecondary education and, finally, that recommendations be developed on the means of providing most equitably for the financial needs of postsecondary education in Michigan in the years to come.

In structuring this broad charge to the Commission, the Governor also emphasized certain basic principles, two of which I would like to cite, for they tend to illuminate where I am coming from in my remarks this afternoon. First, Governor Milliken indicated his deep concern with and personal commitment to the concept of lifelong education and his belief that systems needed to be devised to further this objective. Secondly, he articulated his fundamental concern "that all segments of society have a basic right to participate equally in the higher education process, to the extent of their own needs and interests, limited only by factors of capacity and capability, not by economics or discrimination."

Such concerns as these led the Governor to recommend to the Commission not only that procedures be identified for more fully equalizing educational opportunity beyond the high school but that means be defined "for extending postsecondary education services to the broader public, through the establishment of new delivery systems," and that efforts be made "to encourage the general acceptance of non-traditional patterns of learning, and to reduce the reliance of institutions upon 'lockstep' patterns of educational development."

For myself, I have taken these words to mean a general commitment from the highest level of state government to general change in our present system of providing for the postsecondary educational needs of the citizens of Michigan and support for the exploration of new possibilities for extending learning opportunities to the public at large.

A little background may be in order here, for the benefit of those of you unfamiliar with Michigan's system of higher education – a system, incidentally, which has often been described as a "nonsystem." You must first take account of the fact that each of the State's 13 public baccalaureate institutions are seated in the State Constitution, and that the

boards of control of these institutions enjoy considerable freedom and autonomy over institutional affairs, including funds. The community colleges of Michigan, numbering 29 separate institutions, seem no less independent by virture of their governance by locally elected boards.

The Michigan Constitution also provides for an elected State Board of Education which, among its many other responsibilities, is intended to exercise "general planning and coordination" for higher education within the State. This same Constitution, however, directs that in carrying out this responsibility, the autonomy of the institutions shall not be infringed upon, a fact which gives meaning to the concept of "non-system" previously alluded to. What has resulted from this seeming contradiction in assignments of authority is simple confusion, particularly in the area of adult and continuing education, the developing new emphasis in postsecondary education.

THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF WOLVERINE STATE COLLEGE

With this background in mind, I turn now to consideration of a proposal for action modeled in terms of the Governor's charge to the Commission. This proposal, embodied in bill form (SB 998), was recently introduced in the Michigan Legislature with each of the five members of the Senate Education Committee acting as co-sponsor. The proposal calls for the establishment of a new institution of higher education in Michigan, to be known as Wolverine State College – an institution without campus or principal location – an open university in a word, one not unlike those already established in the states of New York and New Jersey, and proposed for establishment in several other states.

I know that you are familiar with the concept of the open university, but perhaps some of the features proposed for Michigan will be of interest to you. To begin with, the proposed legislation articulates three distinct state policy objectives, each of which is partially reflected in the Governor's charge to the Commission on Higher Education.

First, it is proposed that there be established under the umbrella of a single institution – expressly created for the purpose – a new mechanism for extending postsecondary learning opportunities to the broader public – a means of presenting the individual, in effect, with a meaningful alternative in pursuit of his own educational objectives.

Secondly, it is proposed that through means of contracts and agreements entered into between the board of control of this new institution and the boards of other established institutions, private as well as public, all or most of what is now termed "off-campus" education in Michigan could be financed, or subsidized, if you will, by the State on other than a "pay-as-you-go" principle and a means for assuring that the funds appropriated by the State for the purposes of adult and continuing

education would, in fact, be employed by the institutions for such purposes, this to be accomplished through application of a system of dual enrollments and by other procedures.

Thirdly, it is proposed that through employment of such cooperative arrangements, reasonable basis might exist for application of coordinated planning in off-campus education and extension of off-campus services to new populations, thereby assuring the avoidance of non-essential and possibly costly duplication of effort on the part of institutions statewide in this field.

Other provisions of the bill include the following: Under Section 4, authority is extended to the board of control of Wolverine State College to "enter into agreements, not inconsistent with this act, which may include agreements or understandings with other institutions of higher education . . . public and private . . . for use of instructional facilities, including laboratories and classrooms, and for the services of faculties, and staff, under conditions specified within this act, and agreements or contracts with other institutions of higher education, or private agencies, for the operation of appropriate instructional facilities or systems of learning that may further the purposes of home study throughout the state."

And under Section 5, it is also stated that "the board may: (a) hold in its name licenses for the operation of public broadcasting facilities within the state; (b) provide for the establishment of a centralized academic credit accounting and recording system; (c) provide for the development of equivalency examinations for college-level credit; (d) create through its own means or by contract learning resources and instructional programs for the furtherance of home study and individualized learning activities which may result in the granting of external degrees and similar recognitions of merit; (e) initiate other non-traditional study programs and services which in the estimate of the board shall further the educational objectives, and provide for the needs, of adult citizens of this state, whether vocational-technical, general academic, preprofessional, professional, or avocational in nature."

The concept of regional learning centers is also embodied in this bill. Such centers would be located on established institutional campuses – through reconstruction of existing, perhaps underutilized, buildings, under leaseback arrangements, or separately developed in areas of greatest need. The centers might be administered through contract with various institutions, public or private, two-year or four-year, or independently administered, depending upon circumstances or conditions.

These would be intended primarily to provide testing and examination services supportive of Wolverine State College programs. Counseling and guidance services would also be provided, and, when needed, tutorial assistance could be made available to the individual through such centers.

The state could, if it elected to do so, also carry on certain regional support services through such primary person-contact units, such as programs of student financial aid or certain social-service functions which might be tied to educational objectives.

The centers would also have primary records-keeping and research and evaluation functions at the regional level. Several might be employed as learning-resource service centers or production centers, depending upon need.

Uniquely, the bill provides also for the integration of State Library services in a learning systems context, for it provides that the State Library, "consistent with its general state charge, shall make its resources available statewide in support of the instructional programs and services of the Wolverine State College, to the extent needed or required by the board, and under terms of agreements to be entered into between the board and the library." It provides also that "The board of the Wolverine State College shall, in keeping with this arrangement, contain its purchases of learning resources, including books and materials, films audio and video tapes, and other such materials, within the inventories of the Michigan State Library, and provide for the support of the library to the extent agreed to . . . ."

This latter provision was included in the bill in recognition of the fact that libraries are of critical importance to all of adult education, but that institutional libraries should not be asked to assume a statewide responsibility in direct competition with an already established State Library system.

Now, how do we envision cable television in relation to such an undertaking potentially? The answer here is almost obvious. First of all, it may be necessary to distinguish between a cable application as closed circuit and one used as a means to distribute audio and visual messages to the general public. While acknowledging that cable is only one of several technological systems needed to make the Wolverine State College system function with maximum effect – others being standard transmission by broadcast, the use of cassettes (audio and video) film, computer-based instruction systems, and what have you – I nonetheless perceive the role of cable television to be central to the future in two important ways.

I believe, first, that a multiple channel system with two-way capability could be employed to tie the proposed regional learning centers into a coherent statewide network. Not initially, perhaps, but ultimately. (Recognition is given here, also, to the likely production capability of certain of the regional centers.) It is conceivable, too, that such a cable could be employed simultaneously to provide for computer-based instruction distribution between the centers and by way of the centers, between the established institutions, public and private. The University of Illinois' PLATO system provides a good prototype of an operational

capability in this regard.

As suggested, by such means, each of the designated regional centers may become not only an access point in a statewide system but a base for recording and redistribution of instructional materials and programs within a complex of local and regional community systems, which will provide the public contact so very much needed in the future.

The regional system so identified may, on one level, consist of contacts with major population concentrations – working populations, for example, in business, industry and government, wherever groups of working adults might be gathered together conveniently for the purpose of ajob upgrading training, or general education. On the second level, the regional system can be expected to tie into community cable systems operating on a commercial basis and thereby touch the homes of adults, for use as needed.

In this latter regard, the center system can be used, potentially, at least, as a means of providing the much-needed interconnection between the various community cable systems now in operation or proposed for future operation.

Let me digress for just a moment to point out here the activities of a joint legislative study committee on cable television in Michigan that is seeking a basis for public policy decision-making in this field. I am given to understand that this committee is very much concerned with the question of system compatability and the capability of developing interconnected systems, having possible application to the performance of the public's business in government as well as in education.

I point this out for, as is obvious to each of you, the potential of cable television in a state systems planning context, may well depend upon the availability of state guidelines in these essential regards.

Related to this concern is my belief that the full potential of cable in its application to education will not be realized until we reach a point of full spectrum capability on cable. We cannot, in other words, anticipate the effective use of cable in terms of single-channel reservations. The present rules for cable require such reservations, of course, and require also a simple 20-channel potential on the part of cable operators. Neither, in my estimation, is or will be satisfactory for the needs of education. Both represent continued application of a technical scarcity principle in practice, the position of the Office of Telecommunications Policy in the White House notwithstanding.

In the final analysis, the utility of cable for systems of individualized instruction, such as is envisioned in the concept of Wolverine State College, unless multiple-channel use is deemed both possible and economically feasible, may otherwise be limited.

THE PRINCIPLE ADVANTAGES OF THIS LEARNING SYSTEM

1. The system proposed, which is supportive of a Wolverine State College, can be expected to provide improved student access to postsecondary education and result, thereby, in greater equality of educational opportunity throughout the society.
2. The system can be expected also to result in improved learning, in that it is based fundamentally upon a well known psychological principle which holds that learning will be enhanced when it follows from the individual's own need to know. The focus is on learning, *not* teaching; the student, not the instructor; the output, not the input.
3. The system can be expected to provide a more effective and efficient means for utilizing the existing potentials of public libraries and other community institutions, programs, and services, in direct support of postsecondary education.
4. The system can be expected to create the means for more effectively reintegrating learning experiences and work experiences (living experiences?) in that it builds upon a principle of cooperative education and relates systems for learning to the community as a whole. (Recall that medical education began in the community and only subsequently became institutionalized, as did legal education, teacher training, and much else that is now part of the modern university. What Wolverine State College may succeed in doing, therefore, is to further the movement away from the campus by relocating much of what is *real* in education from the campus to the community.)
5. The system may provide an excellent means also for stimulating public-private institutional cooperation. Service contracts entered into between public and private institutions, I would suggest, may be more effective in the long run as a means of providing support for private institutions than direct grants-in-aid, and have greater public appeal under given circumstances as well. By such means, in effect, we may more directly rationalize the public purposes to be served by private institutions.
6. Finally, and most critically, I think, the availability of such a system can be expected to provide a much needed stimulus for employers to grant released time for continuing education or in-service training. I can, for example, foresee the time when the State Civil Service might build into the worker's contract, a means for earning educational leave hours in the same manner as is now provided for sick-leave or annual-leave hours. And I can foresee the possibility of national, state and local unions writing similar objectives into employee contracts. What is needed to accomplish

this objective, however, is the availability of a learning system that makes sense in terms of the needs and wants of the individual – one which can be made sufficiently flexible to serve such needs.